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INVESTIGATING THE USE OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ENHANCING THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE DIVISION OF LUCENA CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a tool for improving the communicative competence of public secondary school students in the Division of Lucena City. It determined the extent of CLT use across grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences; explored teachers' perceptions of its effectiveness; and identified problems encountered in classroom application. Using a descriptive–correlational quantitative design, data were gathered from English teachers of fourteen junior high schools through a validated questionnaire. Findings revealed that CLT strategies were extensively practiced and perceived as highly effective in encouraging authentic communication and learner participation. However, limited English proficiency, large class sizes, and inadequate materials remained challenges. Statistical analysis showed significant differences in the extent of CLT use when grouped according to years of service. The study concludes that CLT continues to be a viable and powerful approach in fostering communicative competence and recommends sustained teacher training, collaborative learning, and policy support to ensure its consistent application in the Philippine public-school context.

KEYWORDS: *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Communicative Competence, English Language Teaching, Lucena City*

INTRODUCTION

English occupies a prominent role in the Philippine educational system as the principal medium of instruction and a language of global participation. Despite this, Filipino learners continue to perform below expected levels in international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2018), which revealed persistent deficiencies in reading comprehension and language use. To address these concerns, communicative competence has been identified by the Department of Education as a crucial learning outcome across grade levels.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as an answer to these challenges. It emphasizes language as a means of communication rather than a set of isolated grammatical rules. By engaging students in meaningful interaction, CLT enables them to use English in authentic situations and to develop fluency alongside accuracy.

In the Division of Lucena City, several initiatives such as *Project 4B's (Every Child Reads and Counts)* have been introduced to strengthen literacy and communication skills. Yet, despite these efforts, many students still struggle to express ideas confidently in English. This study therefore explores the use of CLT as a framework for developing communicative competence among public-school students in Lucena City, providing empirical data that could inform instructional improvement and policy formulation.

REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT LITERATURE

The review of related literature presents the theoretical and empirical foundations of the study, which is anchored on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It discusses how CLT has evolved as a learner-centered approach that prioritizes authentic communication as both the means and goal of language learning. The reviewed works provide an overview of the role of English in Philippine education, the theoretical bases of CLT, and the four components of communicative competence—grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. The section also highlights relevant studies conducted locally and abroad that validate the use of CLT in enhancing the communicative competence of students while addressing the contextual challenges of classroom implementation.

The English Language in Philippine Education

The review began by emphasizing the role of English as both an official and instructional language in the Philippines. It continues to influence students' access to higher education and employment opportunities (Reyes & Valerio, 2019). However, gaps in proficiency remain, especially between public and private school learners. These disparities are attributed to limited exposure to

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authentic communication and the persistent use of grammar-translation approaches (Maestre & Gindidis, 2016). Consequently, the reviewed studies recommend communicative and learner-centered approaches to bridge these gaps and strengthen functional language use among students.

Theoretical Foundations of CLT

The theoretical underpinnings of the study are drawn from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emerged through the frameworks of Canale and Swain (1984) and Richards and Rodgers (2014). These scholars identified communicative competence as a combination of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components. CLT promotes language learning through meaningful interaction, authenticity, and learner engagement rather than mechanical drills. It also highlights the importance of using language for real communication tasks that develop both fluency and accuracy.

Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence refers to a learner's ability to use accurate syntax, morphology, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Within the CLT framework, grammar instruction is contextualized rather than rule-based, allowing students to infer language patterns through communicative activities (Alejo, 2014). Local studies by Bargo and Go (2021) support this view, showing that Filipino learners achieve better grammatical mastery when they are exposed to interactive exercises rather than rote memorization.

Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence pertains to the ability to use language appropriately across social and cultural settings. Canale and Swain (1984) explain that this competence involves sensitivity to context, politeness, and the norms of interaction. In Philippine classrooms, learners often translate directly from Filipino or local dialects, leading to pragmatic inaccuracies (Reyes & Valerio, 2019). To address this, CLT encourages the use of real-life simulations, role-plays, and dialogue-based tasks that foster awareness of social appropriateness and cultural nuances in communication.

Discourse Competence

Discourse competence is defined as the capacity to organize sentences and ideas cohesively and coherently in both spoken and written forms. Ahmad and Jamil (2023) note that this competence allows learners to sustain meaningful interaction and logical flow in communication. Research by Nuñez and Pardo (2022) demonstrates that consistent exposure to discourse-based activities such as storytelling, interviews, and collaborative writing improves coherence and critical thinking skills. CLT classrooms, therefore, emphasize extended discourse to help students connect ideas naturally.

Strategic Competence

Strategic competence involves the ability to maintain communication when faced with linguistic gaps. Learners employ strategies such as paraphrasing, asking for clarification, or using gestures to express meaning effectively (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In multilingual contexts like the Philippines, these strategies are especially valuable as they foster learner autonomy and confidence. Teachers who explicitly teach and model communication repair techniques strengthen students' ability to manage communication breakdowns and sustain interaction successfully.

Related Studies

Both international and local studies support the effectiveness of CLT in enhancing communicative competence. Zainuddin and Moore (2021) found that CLT, when integrated with digital tools, fosters authentic communication and learner collaboration. In the Philippines, Maestre and Gindidis (2016), Reyes and Valerio (2019), and Bargo and Go (2021) observed that CLT improves students' oral fluency and motivation despite contextual limitations such as large classes and limited instructional materials. Overall, the reviewed literature establishes that CLT is an effective and relevant approach for developing communicative competence among Filipino learners, provided that teachers receive sufficient training, support, and access to instructional resources.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study sought to determine the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing the communicative competence of public secondary school students in the Division of Lucena City. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of English teachers in terms of sex, years in service, and grade level taught?
2. To what extent do English teachers use CLT to enhance communicative competence in terms of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components?
3. What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of CLT in enhancing communicative competence?
4. What challenges do teachers encounter in implementing CLT?
5. Is there a significant difference in the extent of CLT use when grouped according to demographic characteristics?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures used in conducting the study. It presents the research design, respondents, research instrument, data-gathering procedures, and data analysis plan utilized to investigate the use of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in enhancing the communicative competence of public secondary school students in the Division of Lucena City.

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design to investigate the use of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in public secondary schools in the Division of Lucena City and its effectiveness in enhancing students'

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communicative competence. The descriptive method was selected because it allows for the systematic description, analysis, and interpretation of existing practices without manipulating variables. According to Penwarden (2014), descriptive research seeks to describe and analyze phenomena as they naturally occur, providing insights into relationships and variations that exist among the variables being studied.

In this study, the descriptive approach was employed to examine the extent to which English teachers applied CLT in terms of grammatical or linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. The study also explored teachers' perceptions of CLT as a method for enhancing communicative competence and identified the challenges they encountered in its implementation. The research followed a quantitative approach, utilizing a structured questionnaire and statistical tools to analyze and interpret the collected data.

B. Research Respondents

The respondents of the study consisted of 68 English Language teachers from 14 public secondary schools in the Division of Lucena City during the School Year 2024–2025. The study employed the total enumeration sampling technique, which included all English teachers handling English subjects as respondents. This ensured that the data represented the entire population of English teachers in the division, thus increasing the reliability and comprehensiveness of the findings.

Teachers from the elementary and senior high school levels were excluded since the study focused on the junior high school level. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Education – Schools Division of Lucena City, and respondents were informed of the study's purpose. Participation was voluntary, and all information gathered was treated with strict confidentiality to uphold ethical research standards.

Research Instrument and Data Gathering Procedure

The main data-gathering tool used in this study was a researcher-made questionnaire designed to collect information on the extent of use of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, the perceptions of English teachers toward its effectiveness, and the challenges they encountered in implementing it.

The questionnaire consisted of four parts, each corresponding to the major variables of the study. Part I – Demographic Profile gathered background information such as the respondents' gender, years in service, and grade level taught. Part II – The Use of the Communicative Language Teaching Method measured how often and to what extent teachers implemented CLT in relation to the four components of communicative competence: grammatical or linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. Part III – Teachers' Perceptions on CLT contained statements assessing teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the effectiveness of CLT in improving students' communicative competence. Part IV – Challenges Encountered in Teaching English Using CLT identified the problems teachers faced in applying the method, such as lesson planning, classroom management, student proficiency, and limited training or resources.

The instrument was developed by the researcher in consultation with the research adviser and underwent validation by experts in English language teaching and research methodology to ensure clarity, accuracy, and relevance of each item. It was then pilot-tested among fifteen (15) English teachers from Quezon National High School to assess its clarity, readability, and applicability to the target respondents. Based on the feedback from the validators and pilot participants, revisions were made to refine the final version of the questionnaire.

Two types of response formats were used. For Part I, respondents selected categorical answers that described their demographic information. For Parts II, III, and IV, a four-point Likert scale was used to determine the degree or extent of agreement with each statement. The scale and its corresponding verbal interpretations are presented below:

Table 1. Four-Point Likert Scale and Verbal Interpretation

Scale Range Verbal Interpretation

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.50 – 4.00	Great Extent (G.E.)
3	2.50 – 3.49	Moderate Extent (M.E.)
2	1.50 – 2.49	Slight Extent (S.E.)
1	1.00 – 1.49	Least Extent (L.E.)

The questionnaire served as the primary tool for gathering data from the respondents. Before its distribution, a permit to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Education – Schools Division of Lucena City. The researcher coordinated with the school principals and English department heads to facilitate the data collection process. The administration of the questionnaire was done through both online and face-to-face methods to ensure maximum participation and convenience for the respondents.

Prior to answering the questionnaire, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants. They were assured of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of their responses. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire, and retrieval was done immediately after completion. Strict ethical and health protocols were observed throughout the data-gathering process to ensure accuracy, integrity, and the well-being of all participants.

This integrated process of instrument development, validation, and data collection ensured that the information obtained was reliable, valid, and aligned with the objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the results of the study on the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing the communicative competence of public secondary school

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students in the Division of Lucena City. The analysis is organized based on the research questions that guided the investigation. Each paragraph discusses a major finding supported by relevant literature and the implications for English language instruction.

The findings revealed that the respondents, composed of English language teachers from fourteen public secondary schools, represented a balanced demographic profile in terms of sex, years of service, and grade level taught. Most respondents were female, reflecting the gender distribution common in the teaching profession. A considerable number of teachers had more than ten years of teaching experience, which indicates a mature teaching force with substantial classroom exposure. The variation in teaching experience is relevant to the study, as it influences the degree of confidence and flexibility in applying CLT strategies.

Results showed that English teachers extensively employed CLT strategies in their instruction. Among the four components of communicative competence, grammatical and discourse competences obtained the highest weighted means. Teachers regularly designed communicative activities such as pair work, role-playing, and discussions that integrated grammatical accuracy with meaningful language use. Sociolinguistic and strategic competences were also observed but to a lesser extent, owing to the limited opportunities for students to engage in authentic social interactions. These findings are consistent with Alejo (2014) and Richards and Rodgers (2014), who emphasized that communicative competence develops most effectively when students use language in context rather than in isolation.

Teachers held a highly positive perception of CLT as a language teaching approach. They viewed CLT as instrumental in improving students' confidence, fluency, and motivation to use English beyond the classroom. Teachers reported that learners became more willing to participate in discussions and more capable of expressing opinions independently. This aligns with the results of Reyes and Valerio (2019) and Bargo and Go (2021), who found that CLT fosters learner autonomy and engagement through active participation. The results suggest that CLT encourages not only linguistic competence but also the development of 21st-century communication skills such as collaboration and critical thinking.

Despite its effectiveness, teachers encountered several challenges in implementing CLT. Large class sizes, limited instructional time, and inadequate materials were identified as the most pressing concerns. Some students' low proficiency levels and lack of exposure to English hindered their ability to engage in communicative tasks. These problems echo the observations of Maestre and Gindidis (2016), who noted that Filipino teachers face systemic constraints that limit their use of CLT. The findings underscore the need for institutional support and classroom management innovations to sustain communicative practices in large and diverse learning environments.

Statistical analysis further revealed a significant difference in the extent of CLT use when grouped according to years of service. More experienced teachers demonstrated greater proficiency in integrating communicative techniques, while less experienced teachers tended to rely on more traditional, form-focused methods. This result indicates that pedagogical experience enhances the ability to balance fluency and accuracy in classroom communication. It supports the claim of Richards and Rodgers (2014) that teaching experience is a crucial factor in the successful implementation of communicative approaches.

Overall, the findings affirm that CLT continues to serve as an effective approach for developing communicative competence in public secondary schools. However, sustained training, adequate resources, and contextual adaptation are essential to ensure that communicative strategies are fully realized in actual classroom practice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented in this chapter are the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study and the recommendations formulated based on these conclusions. The main focus of this research was to determine the extent of use of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in enhancing the communicative competence of public secondary school students in the Division of Lucena City. Specifically, the study examined the utilization of CLT in terms of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences, as well as the perceptions of English teachers toward CLT and the challenges they encountered in its implementation.

A descriptive quantitative method of research was employed, utilizing a researcher-made questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument. The instrument was validated by experts in the field and pilot-tested to ensure clarity and reliability before its administration. Statistical tools such as percentage, weighted mean, composite mean, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were applied to analyze and interpret the data gathered. The hypothesis of the study was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method is extensively practiced by English teachers in the Division of Lucena City and is perceived as an effective instructional approach for enhancing students' communicative competence. Teachers consistently implement CLT strategies that address the four components of communicative competence—grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic—enabling students to use the English language in authentic and meaningful contexts.

The results further indicated that teachers' years of service have a significant influence on their ability to employ CLT effectively, suggesting that experience contributes to pedagogical flexibility, classroom management, and methodological proficiency. Despite the overall positive implementation, several challenges were

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identified, including large class sizes, limited instructional time, and inadequate teaching resources, which hinder the full integration of CLT in the classroom setting.

Overall, the findings affirm that CLT aligns well with the goals of the Department of Education's MATATAG K to 10 Curriculum, as it fosters functional literacy, learner engagement, and communicative proficiency among Filipino students, thereby supporting the continuous improvement of English language instruction in public secondary schools.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings and conclusions, several recommendations are presented to further strengthen the implementation of CLT in public secondary schools.

For the Department of Education, the agency should intensify professional development programs that focus on communicative and learner-centered language teaching. Continuous seminars, workshops, and in-service trainings must be provided to equip teachers with practical and updated methodologies aligned with CLT principles.

For School Administrators, promoting collaboration among English teachers through regular Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and professional learning communities is highly encouraged. These initiatives will allow teachers to share best practices, discuss classroom challenges, and co-develop CLT-based instructional materials suited to local contexts.

For Teachers, integrating communicative and contextualized classroom tasks such as debates, dialogues, interviews, and role-plays can foster both fluency and accuracy. Teachers should adjust these strategies according to students' proficiency levels to ensure inclusive and meaningful participation in every class interaction.

For Curriculum Planners, reviewing and refining learning materials and assessment tools to ensure alignment with communicative objectives is necessary. Incorporating performance-based and task-oriented assessments will help evaluate students' ability to use English effectively in authentic situations.

For Future Researchers, exploring the integration of digital platforms and technology-assisted tools in CLT implementation is recommended. Studies on online collaboration, interactive media, and mobile learning applications can offer innovative approaches to sustaining communicative competence in today's classrooms.

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